

Idaho Drug Courts 2004

Report to Governor Dirk Kempthorne And the First Regular Session of the 58th Idaho Legislature

DRUG COURT GROWTH

Drug Courts continued a year of solid growth and achievement. Since Idaho's first two drug courts were established in 1998, the effort has grown to 38 currently operating drug courts. During 2004, new drug courts began operation in Kootenai, Latah, Twin Falls, Payette, Adams, Gem, Washington, Oneida, and Caribou Counties.

NUMBERS SERVED

During 2004, Idaho drug courts accepted 731 new offenders and graduated 347. With the advent of juvenile drug courts, mental health drug courts, and the family dependency-child protection drug court there are now on average 800 participants at any given time. By the end of 2004 the applications to enter Idaho's drug courts exceeded available funds to provide the necessary drug treatment in several judicial districts. These districts have had to limit new admissions to drug court.

COST-RELATED IMPACTS / PRISON COSTS

While formal cost-benefit analysis is a complex process, some preliminary projections are possible. The current drug courts consist of 520 defendants with felony offenses that carry a significant potential of a prison term. The current average annual cost of incarceration in one of Idaho's prisons for one felony offender is \$15,925. In contrast, one year in drug court costs the State approximately \$3,583 per defendant. *This translates to a projected annual savings to the State of \$6,417,800* ($520 \times \$15,925 - 520 \times \$3,583 = \$6,417,800$). Even if confinement to retained jurisdiction costs are used instead of annual prison costs, projected savings to the State are substantial.

DRUG-FREE BIRTHS

From another cost-avoidance perspective, during the past year, Idaho drug courts reported 26 drug-free babies born to mothers under drug court supervision. Their mothers curtailed or eliminated drug use during a substantial period during pregnancy and the baby was not born addicted. National data estimates that the minimum additional cost to care for a drug-addicted baby is \$750,000. Using this figure, we can estimate that in 2004, Idaho saved \$19,500,000 by effectively engaging pregnant drug court defendants.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Data collected through October 2004 in the Ada County Drug Court demonstrates another impact of successful drug court participation. Of the Ada County Drug Court graduates, only 45% were employed when they began drug court. However, 96% were employed at the time of their graduation. These graduates demonstrated an overall average wage increase of \$ 5.24 per hour or \$10,900 per year.

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OTHER OUTCOMES

Data collected under a grant awarded to Idaho by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration also shows the positive impacts of Idaho drug courts. The following table shows results for a sample of 205 offenders, comparing their status at admission into drug court to that at 6 and 12 months after entering drug court.

Status of Offenders	At admission	6 months later	12 months later
Employed	32%	48%	62%
In school or vocational training	9%	19%	23%
No drug use in past month	39%	93%	93%
No jail days in past month	65%	76%	81%
One or more arrests/ any charge	27%	5%	6%
One or more drug offense arrests	21%	2%	1%

(While not all offenders interviewed at 6 and 12 months were still in drug court, only 8 offenders were lost to follow-up in this study.)

This data shows very promising results from drug court participation.

In the 7th District Mental Health Court, analysis of participants' jail time and psychiatric hospitalizations indicated that, when compared to their history prior to entering the mental health court, they reduced jail time by 85% and hospital days by 97%.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Drug Court Coordinating Committee adopted guidelines in 2004 for adult drug courts based on research-based practices and national consensus standards for quality assurance. Each drug court conducts an annual evaluation of their operations against these standards. The statewide Drug Court Coordinator is available to assist in training and in obtaining specific technical assistance to assist drug courts implement these standards and improve their efforts. Training is provided in the community for new drug court teams and for existing teams. The training allows each team to review their procedures and develop plans to improve outcomes. Three annual Drug Court Institutes have been held and plans are in place to continue offering this skill-building and best-practices showcase. Nationally, training is provided through the Department of Justice drug court planning initiative and through national conferences and training events. Several Idaho teams have been selected and taken part in these training activities.

SERVING JUVENILES IN DRUG COURT

Juvenile drug courts are showing promise in nine Idaho communities. Grants funding juvenile drug courts in Kootenai and Ada Counties and in the 7th Judicial District are ending in 2005. Juvenile drug courts also offer an option for stabilizing youth returning to Idaho communities from State custody. Securing ongoing funding and initiating an outcome evaluation for the juvenile drug courts are priorities for the coming year.

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION

An independent evaluation of Idaho drug courts has been underway for the past three years and is continuing for the next three years. Dr. Edward J. Latessa and Dr. Shelley Johnson Listwan are analyzing data from Idaho drug courts to determine outcomes and to assess operational compliance with effective practices. In 2003, an outcome evaluation of Ada and Kootenai County drug courts was published. Using a matched comparison group of similar offenders, each drug court demonstrated substantial reduction in criminal recidivism (re-arrests) over a follow-up period of over two years.

Re-arrests for:	All Offenders	Graduates	Comparison Group
Ada County	38%	19%	63%
Kootenai County	41%	20%	53%

In 2004, results of a process evaluation were published, identifying that Idaho was serving appropriate defendants and using several research-based practices that have been consistently correlated with successful outcomes. This evaluation also provided guidance for targeted quality assurance efforts and identified the need for a structured assessment of “aftercare” services. This aftercare survey has been completed and shows that Idaho drug courts provide significant ongoing, structured services following active treatment.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The next step in Idaho’s drug court evaluation will be examination of the outcomes of all Idaho adult felony drug courts. Results of this evaluation will be available in 2006.

EXPANDING THE DRUG COURT NETWORK

Idaho has established a statewide network of drug courts. These drug courts provide an important sentencing alternative to prison or commitment. Idaho drug courts serve adults and juveniles as well as families and the mentally ill. A solid foundation exists upon which to build for the future needs of Idaho communities.

There is a clear need to extend the drug court model to address mentally ill defendants. Many mentally ill offenders can be better served in the community if they can be provided with adequate judicial oversight. Applying the drug court model to the issue of the repeat problem-drinking driver would also reduce repeat offenses and resulting injuries and deaths. Methamphetamine use is driving rising incidence of child protection action. Such families can be effectively treated with the drug court model through its highly collaborative team approach and its strong monitoring of compliance. These drug court expansions cannot be carried out with the existing level of resources allocated to drug court operations and treatment.

SUSTAINING EXISTING DRUG COURTS

In addition to the dedicated fund established by the Legislature and substance abuse funds, Idaho has been fortunate to receive a variety of federal grants to implement drug courts in several jurisdictions. These grants have allowed expansion of drug courts despite tough economic times. However, these grants have either ended or are ending soon. Continuing these drug court services through community and State resources is a pressing need.

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MEETING THE GROWING NEED

All Idaho judicial districts face pressures to admit more defendants in existing drug courts and to establish new drug courts for both adults and juveniles, including courts to serve the mentally ill and families facing termination of parental rights. While the dedicated fund established in 2003 provides a stable basic foundation for drug court operations, this fund does not cover the growing demand in Idaho drug courts. In addition, State general funds allocated for substance abuse treatment for drug courts are limited to 525 offenders. The applications for admission to drug court significantly exceed this limit.

Despite the challenges and the reduced resources, drug courts remain a positive and cost-effective effort, an effort all three branches of government, Idaho policymakers, and citizens can be proud of. In these difficult budget times and in the face of increased caseloads and social problems, drug court judges have stepped up to tackle the most difficult problems with vigor and purpose. And they will go further. The judges are anxious to do the job. We ask for the tools to do the job.

The complete Report on the Effectiveness of Drug Courts is posted on the Supreme Court website at www.isc.idaho.gov. If you have questions or we can provide you additional information, please contact:

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